Improving the Well-being of Children in Maine

by
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The Governor of the State of Maine challenged his Children's Cabinet to measurably improve the well-being of children in every Maine community. Communities for Children, developed to pursue the Governor's goals, is a network of 71 community-based coalitions in Maine working on data-based disease prevention and/or health promotion for children.

As part of their work on sustainable development, the Wilderness Society developed a web-based geographical information system mapping tool for presenting census and economic data. Working together, Communities for Children and the Society are developing **Internet Mapping for Communities (IM4C),** an online portal that will help local community coalitions identify and locate children's health problems as well as community assets. Maps, charts, graphs, and tables will be developed online and then downloaded, providing local communities with a new tool for planning, decision-making, fund raising and evaluation.

IM4C will launch the system in six communities in the first year, and in six additional communities in year two. Other data collected by project participants will be data related to children's health that will be used in the prevention of substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, child neglect, etc. The evaluators will explore the different ways each community uses the data, the results they obtain, the problems they have, and the supports they need. Testing is key to this project. They will test each year, and continue through six iterations (three in year one and three in year two). Each community has committed to three tests each, providing written feedback on uses and problems.

Communities for Children is part of the national America's Promise initiative. America's Promise builds upon the collective power of communities and partners to help fulfill the Five Promises for every young person in America: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, marketable skills and opportunities to serve. IM4C will demonstrate how technology can be used to further these five goals.